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ABSTRACT

Study objectives were to: compare in-migrants with non-migrants in order to ascertain the migrants' demographic and socioeconomic contributions to rural areas; analyze the patterns of this in-migration to determine the presence and extent of return migration; contrast returned migrants with in-migrants who had no prior residence in the rural area; and examine those portions of return migration characterized as either goal-oriented moves or failure-to-adapt moves. A minor civil division designated rural and experiencing both a declining population and in-migration (northern New York) was examined via survey (99 households) in terms of age, occupational structure, income, education, and size and structure of family residence. Results indicated: migrants and non-migrants differ, the migrants being younger, more often employed, and less often retired; the migration stream was predominantly return migrants; returned migration was the source of the demographic and economic differences between the migrant and non-migrant populations, the returned migrants being less like the native population than the new migrants. Implications were: returned migration constitutes the major type of movement to a declining area; family relations are paramount in counterstream theory; speculation that urban to rural migration is stimulated by a search for alternative life styles is not supported; differences within the return migration stream necessitate a refinement of migration theory incorporating goal-oriented moves and moves resulting from failure to adapt. (JC)

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MOVING TO THE COUNTRY: RETURN MIGRATION TO A RURAL AREA

by

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Rural areas have long provided numbers for an expanding urban population and research has concentrated on this dominant type of migration. Little notice has been taken of movements to rural areas. However recently the rise of alternative life-styles has created an interest in rural-directed migration. This study intends to identify migration into rural areas by contrasting it with the non-migrant population and within that movement to measure the occurrence of the phenomenon of return migration.

Concept Development

In his now classic statements on migration, Ravenstein suggested that "each main current of migration produces a compensating counter-current" (Ravenstein, 1885: 199). Lee's theory of migration offers reasons for the development of counter currents or counter-streams. He suggests that there may be changes in conditions of either the place of origin or the place of destination so that the former becomes more attractive and the latter less attractive. On the other hand there may be no change in conditions at either origin or destination but the individual may re-evaluate those conditions, ascribing greater attraction to conditions at origin than to those at destination. The re-evaluation may be based on newly defined preferences of life style or newly discovered means of manipulating conditions in the place of origin, e.g., business opportunities (Lee, 1969: 285-288).

The discussion of counterstreams of migration encompasses the movements from urban places to rural places but little research has been done to explore the urban-to-rural flow (Campbell, et al, 1974). Caldwell's work on rural-urban migration to Ghana indicates that former rural residents intend to return to rural areas in their declining years, indeed some are forced to do so by the combined effects of age and sickness, and that others intend returning upon achieving some targeted goal, e.g., acquiring a certain amount of money, (Caldwell, 1969; 185-188). Note that the findings are based on the stated intentions of urban residents and not actual returned migrants. Also conditions in Ghana may preclude the application of the findings to the United States; notable is the fact that the urbanization of rural life in Ghana has not progressed to the point it has in the United States.

In the United States the studies of migration from Kentucky mountain regions to urban centers have raised the question of return counterstreams, suggesting that some return because they can not adapt and others to retire. Long observations have lead researchers to assume "until more systematic data are available, that most migrants to Eastern Kentucky are former residents and their spouses" (Brown, et. al., 1970: 101).

This study intends four objectives: 1. to compare in-migration with non-migrants in order to ascertain the migrants' demographic and socioeconomic contributions to the rural area; 2. to analyze the patterns of this in-migration to determine the presence and extent of return migration within it; 3. to contrast returned migrants with in-migrants who had no prior residence in the area; and 4. to

examine those portions of return migration which are characterized as either goal-oriented moves and failure-to-adapt moves.

Migration is a selective process. Lee offers the proposition that "the characteristics of migrants tend to be intermediate between the characteristics of the population at origin and the population at destination" (Lee, 1969: 296). Differences of income, occupation, education and participation have been recorded between migrants and others in their place of origin or their place of destination (Blevin, 1971; Shryock, 1964; Zimmer, 1970). This study will apply the proposition of differences to other social indicators hypothesizing that migrants and non-migrants will be differentiated in terms of age, occupational structure, income, education and size and structure of family residential units. If the in-migrants are returning migrants, they can be assumed to have experienced two selection processes, one upon leaving their origin and one upon leaving their destination to return home. Theoretically the first selection should differentiate migrants and non-migrants. Therefore those undergoing the second selection are expected to be different from those with no prior residence in the area. It may be that the second selection will produce migrant characteristics more like non-migrants if the reason for their return is failure to adapt, or less like non-migrants if the reason for the return is success in attaining some goal.

Methods

Using fourth count census data for Clinton County in northern New York, a minor civil division was selected for study. This particular MCD had lost the greatest number of people of any of the

county's MCDs in the census decade and yet enumerated a substantial number who had not resided in the county in 1965, thus fulfilling the criterion of being a declining area while experiencing in-migration. All the population in the MCD was designated rural in the 1970 Census. The area is characterized by small villages, farms and open country. The largest urban center in a sixty mile radius has a population of only 19,000 and is twenty miles from the nearest point of the MCD. This condition is expected to minimize urban influences on the rural area.

A twenty per cent systematic sample was drawn from the tax records and an interview schedule was administered to ninety-nine households in the summer of 1974. Comparing survey results with 1970 MCD characteristics (age structure, persons per household, proportion in labor force) indicates that the survey is representative.

Among heads of households enumerated in the sample, thirty per cent was identified as in-migrants (Table 1), that is, those who have resided outside the county for a period of one year or longer. The households represented a total of 362 persons of which 116 were parts of migrants' households. Some data concerning all members of households were collected.

Findings

Migrants and Non-migrants

The demographic characteristics of migrants make positive contributions to the age and sex composition of the area. Migrant

households are larger than non-migrant ones. In terms of age dependency ratios, migrant households support a larger proportion of youthful dependents (under 18) and a smaller proportion of aged dependents (65 and over) than non-migrants. But considering both youth and age, migrants have a higher degree of dependency (Table 2). The dependency is partly related to the fact that households of non-migrants are older than migrant households. This is indicated by the average age of household heads; migrants are, on the average, seven years younger than non-migrants (Table 3). The age-sex pyramid (Figure 1) shows that migrant households contribute to all segments of the population structure. However male migrants make up more than one-third of the ages 0 through 9 and 25 through 44; female migrants contribute more than one-third of the ages 10 through 14 and 20 through 44. Migrant households also have more females present than the non-migrants; sex ratios are 93 and 107, respectively (Table 2).

In general the migrant households can be categorized as relatively large, relatively young and largely female. Each of these characteristics adds balance to the population; compensating for the distortion in the age structure occasioned by out-migrating young adults, providing a youthful component to a relatively old population and reducing a characteristically high sex ratio. In short, in this declining population, in-migration provides the potential for population expansion.

The migrants are attractive not only demographically but also in terms of some of their economic characteristics. A higher proportion of household members are employed among the migrants

than among non-migrants (28.4% and 25.6%, respectively; Table 2). It should be remembered that this higher rate of employment occurs concomitantly with the above noted higher youth dependency; migrants demonstrate higher employment even though they have larger proportions of children at home. The proportion of households with no one employed is greater for non-migrants than for migrants (17% and 13% respectively), and retired household heads are more likely to be found in non-migrant households. Migrant heads of households were better educated than non-migrants; half had completed high school or attained a higher level of education while only thirty-eight per cent of the non-migrants had attained this level. On the other hand, migrants were less likely to be white collar workers and less likely to be farmers, which can be regarded as an entrepreneurial occupation. The occupational structure is reflected in the income pattern; their median income was $1,500 less than that of non-migrant households (Table 3).

The fact that migrants are more active economically allows the inference that in-migration does not create burdens of unemployment for the area. However their relatively higher level of education does not lead to white collar work nor to the more lucrative incomes. Thus their indirect and direct financial support of local institutions is not expected to be great. Perhaps one can even go further and anticipate low levels of other types of support, such as through leadership.

Migration Patterns

Attention is now turned to the characteristics of the migration itself. The major finding here is that in-migration is

predominantly return migration: two-thirds of the migrants had previously lived in the county. Studies of return migration using census data, primarily organized around the question of place of residence five years prior to the census, provide a cross-sectional view which is limited by the nature of other census questions. This survey allows return migration to be treated more like the process it is, permitting individual biographical data to be added to the aggregated census data.

On the average returned migrants were about twenty-four and one-half years old when they departed from the county and they returned about five and one-half years later. The age of departure was consistent for the stream of returning migrants over time and in agreement with the age of departure of out-migrants in general. (Bogue 1969: 763; Shryock, 1964: 346-399). However recent returnees (arriving in 1965 or later) tended to have stayed away longer, averaging over an eight-year stay.

Returned migrants had been attracted to urban centers either in New York or in New England; all of which were within a 400 mile radius. Earlier migrants were more likely to have gone to New England cities (e.g., Brattleboro, Vt., Holyoke and Springfield, Mass.) and later migrants were more likely to move to New York cities (e.g., Rochester, Syracuse and Buffalo).

Migrants with no prior residence in the county, referred to as new migrants, were slightly older upon arrival than were returned migrants when they arrived (33 and 30 years, respectively). Among

new migrants, about half had come from large cities and most of these were in Canada and within a distance of less than 100 miles. Others had come from equally close distances and from rural localities in New York. The former were more likely to have arrived before 1965 and others after 1965.

While the details of migration vary, an overall pattern can be seen: the migration covers a relatively small geographical region. Return migration is basically rural to urban to rural; while new migration is divided between urban to rural and rural to rural. New migrants are older than returning migrants and the period during which returning migrants are absent may be expanding.

Early migration theory postulates stages of movement over short distances toward urban centers. These data substantiate short, staged, city-ward movements but requires the integration of counterstream theory. Thusly, some of those moving toward nearby cities decide to return to their less urban environment to become the dominant portion of in-migration to low density areas.

Return Migration

When returned migrants are compared to those with no prior residence in the county (new migrants), returned migrants tend to be younger (Table 3) and, as a corollary, to have a larger proportion of their household under eighteen years of age and smaller proportions in the older ages. The households of returned migrants are slightly larger. New migrants are more like non-migrants,

in age and in proportional distribution of ages in their households (Table 2). Thus the impact for demographic change infused by migrants is substantially a function of the returning migrants.

The two types of migrants are expected to differ in other characteristics as well. Regarding occupational structure, farming is the dominant occupation of employed new migrants; four out of five farm and this compares with one farmer out of five among returned migrants and two out of five for non-migrants. Intention to farm was the most frequent reason given by new migrants for moving to the county. Not one of those returning listed a desire to farm as a reason for moving back. On the other hand almost two-thirds (62%) of the returned migrants occupied blue collar jobs. Contrasting returnees and non-migrants, the former had twice the proportion of blue collar workers and half the proportion of farmers. The economic status of the returned migrants is also indicated by their median income, reported as approximately $10,000 and being about $1,500 less than both non-migrants and new migrants (Table 3).

Retirement and unemployment figure high in all groupings in the survey. New migrants report 40% retired, compared with 32% among non-migrants and 20% among returned migrants (Table 3). The question arises: Do migrants enter the county to retire: None offered this reason in an open-ended question dealing with motives. Furthermore an examination of ages upon entering the county indicates that none were of a normal retiring age. Thus it would seem that in-migration is not directly related to retirement.

Attention is called to the sharp occupational differences between return and new migration. Returning migrants are more likely to fill service occupations and less likely to occupy entrepreneurial positions (Including farming in the latter classification). Considering another SES indicator, the level of education of both new and returning migrants, while not high, is superior to that of non-migrants. An equal proportion, fifty per cent, of both types of migrants has completed high school; for non-migrants the proportion is thirty-eight per cent (Table 3).

The migration stream is also differentiated in terms of family relationships. Half of the returning migrants indicated that a family responsibility or tie was their reason for returning to the area. In order to explore the familial ties of these two migration groups, the whereabouts of parents of heads of households and their spouses was ascertained. Excluding households in which parents were dead, it was found that almost all (93%) of the returning migrants had at least one parent living in the county. In this regard they approximate the condition in non-migrant households where ninety-six per cent have parents in the county (Table 4). Thus returning migrants are coming back not only to a geographic area but also to an existing family structure.

Regarding parents of the spouses of returning migrants about two-thirds are located in the county. This is a smaller proportion than among non-migrants (Table 4). The fact that the proportion of parents of the spouse in the county is smaller than the proportion of parents of the head in the county may indicate that

marriages are planned or occur while migrants are away, and upon returning, spouses leave their parents to accompany the head of household.

As would be expected none of the new migrants reported parents in the county but one-third have parents of a spouse living in the area (Table 4). Either the spouse attracts the new migrant to the area or the new migrant marries after arriving. Unfortunately this can not be tested with these data.

The presence of fifty per cent or more of one's relatives in the county is taken to indicate a kinship structure concentrated there. Sixty per cent of the returned migrants have the majority of their relatives in the county; the proportions among non-migrants and new migrants are substantially less, forty-two and ten per cent, respectively (Table 4).

Using these demographic, socioeconomic and familial characteristics, a composite view of a returned migrant is possible. They are young (younger than both non-migrants and new migrants), are part of households with large proportions of children (larger proportions than both non-migrants and new migrants), are employed in blue collar occupations (more frequently than non-migrants and new migrants) and earn a relatively low median income (lower than both non-migrants and new migrants) and are attracted to the area by family ties. Demographically and economically return migrants are different. Their demographic differences are the important components of in-migration serving to remedy population imbalances. The function of the economic differences for the area may well rest

on the returning migrant's orientation toward his move. One such consideration, whether the move was goal-oriented or the result of a failure to adapt, is explored in the next section.

The presence of parents and parents-in-law and a large proportion of relatives in the county suggest that migrants may return because of the strength of these family ties. It is postulated that, while economic considerations dominate out-migration from low density areas, familial considerations dominate the returning portion of the counterstream migration.

Return Migration and Failure to Adapt

Return migration may occur after one has attained goals he has set and may even be a goal itself; or it may result from the migrant's failure to adapt, thus becoming a type of retreat. It is argued here that an adjusted migrant would return under arranged conditions and those failing to adapt would more likely be those without a planned return. Response to the question, Did you have a job arranged here before you moved?, is used to indicate whether the return migration was a planned or an unplanned return, and thus goal-oriented or a failure to adapt. The responses identified a third of those returning as failing to adapt.

While a full analysis of these sub-parts of returned migration is hazardous because of the few cases, it is instructive to note that those defined as failing to adapt are differentiated from the others. They are older but have larger families, have a lower median income, lower level of education and a higher proportion of employment in blue collar jobs (Table 5). Thus tentatively it

may be asserted that the differences observed in the characteristics of returned migrants are accentuated by the presence of those who are returning as a result of failing to adapt to their urban experience.

Summary and Conclusions

This analysis has allowed a detailed study of migration to a rural declining area. It has demonstrated that migrants do differ from non-migrants and that the in-migration in terms of demographic and economic characteristics is beneficial to the receiving area, providing a younger population which is more likely to be employed and less likely to be retired.

The migration stream was further identified to be predominantly return migration. The patterns of these migrants was to leave the county in their mid-twenties and to return five years later. Their destinations were moderately large cities located less than 400 miles from their homes.

Returned migration was not only the dominant type of in-migration but it also was the source of the demographic and economic differences between the migrant and non-migrant populations, that is, for almost every variable the returned migrants were less like the native population than were the new migrants.

There are certain implications from these findings for migration theory. First, counterstream migration exists in urban-to-rural movements, and these counterstreams apply even to

declining rural areas. In fact, counterstream migration, or that portion of it referred to as return migration, constitutes the major type of movement to declining areas.

Secondly, theoretic considerations related to the selectivity of out-migration are tested here, albeit indirectly through the examination of characteristics of the returning migrants. Rural-to-urban-to-rural migrants are better educated, are more likely to fill skilled and semi-skilled occupations, but earn less than their non-migrant neighbors.

Thirdly, additional evidence is added to that from other studies; all of which demand the integration of relational variables into migration theory. Economic considerations have long been the chief explanation for migration behavior. Family relationships are paramount in counterstream theory, particularly related to return migration. Studies such as this indicate that presence of parents and relatives are characteristics in which returned migrants resemble the non-migrants.

Fourthly, the migration from rural areas fits theoretic statement that such migration proceeds over relatively short distances. Furthermore the recent speculation that urban-to-rural movements are stimulated by a search for alternative life styles is not supported by this study.

Finally, the demonstration of differences within the return migration stream, based on the migrant's failure to adapt, necessitates a refinement in migration theory which incorporates goal-oriented moves and moves resulting from failure to adapt as types of return migration.

In addition, there are several practical considerations available as a result of this study. Workers in rural areas should be cognizant that a sizeable proportion of their constituents have had urban residential experiences. Such experiences may enable these individuals to be catalytic in community programs, if in no other way than as a resource to provide a non-local perspective. Those having experienced return migration have become marginal persons in the local system and therefore a potential informant and liaison for change agents. Their level of education may facilitate this role as well.

In the interest of encouraging return migration to low density areas, which in turn has an effect on population balance, the existence of the phenomenon of return migration could well be acknowledged and local institutions (particularly the school) could discuss with their clients the viability of migration and return in career planning.

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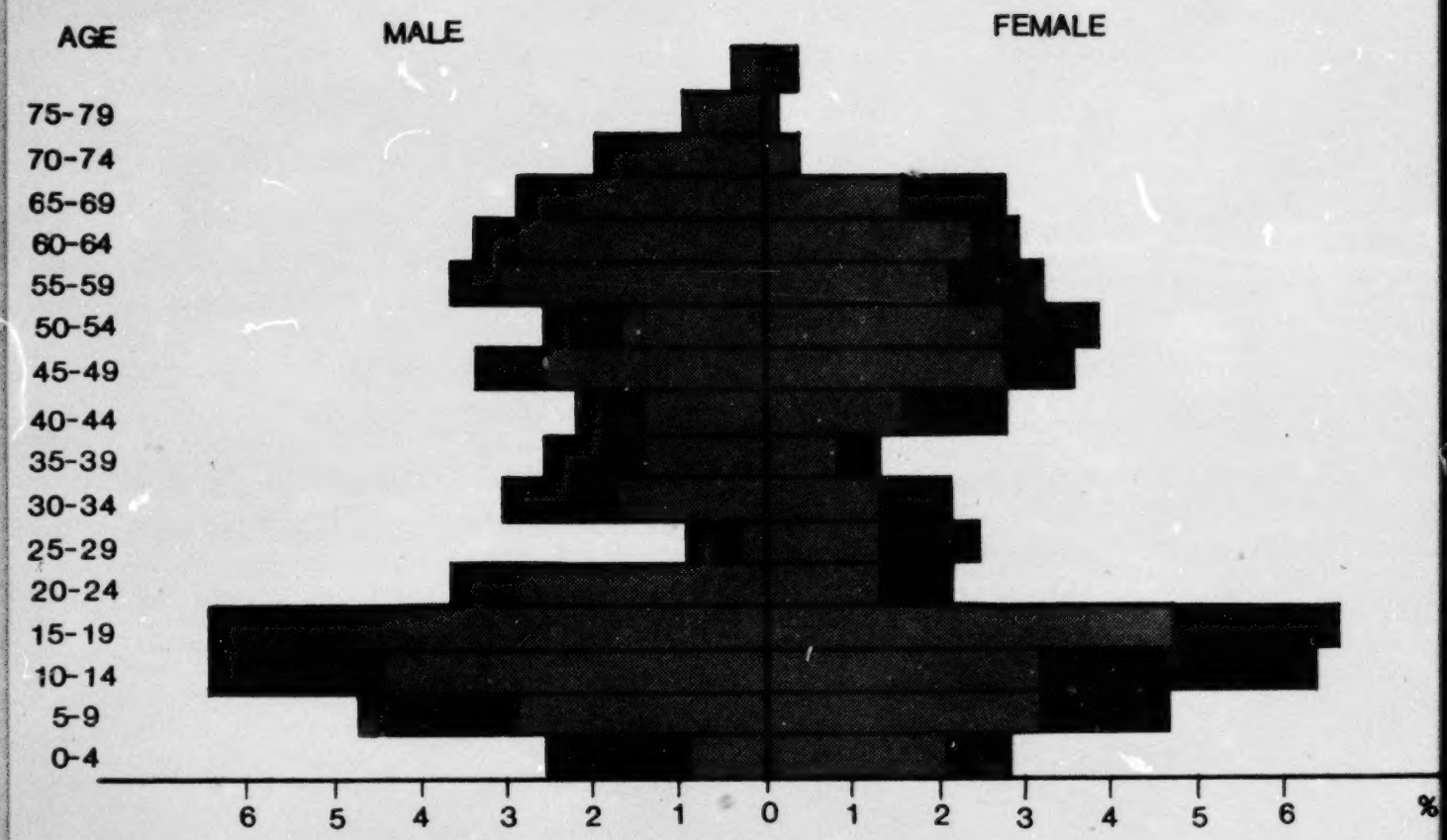

FIG 1 AGE & SEX COMPOSITION
OF MINOR CIVIL DIVISION SURVEY, 1974.
(SHOWING CONTRIBUTION OF MIGRANT HOUSEHOLDS)

■ REPRESENTS MIGRANT HOUSEHOLDS.

Tables for Moving to the Country
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TABLE 1

Composition of Sample

Minor Civil Division Sample Survey 1974

	HOUSEHOLD HEADS				HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS			
	No.		%		No.		%	
Non-Migrants	69		70		246		68	
Migrants	30		30		116		32	
Returned migrants		20		20		78		22
New Migrants		10		10		38		10
Total	99		100		362		100	

TABLE 2

Selected Characteristics of Non-Migrant, returned migrant and new migrant households: Size, age distribution, age dependency ratio, employment status and sex ratio.

Minor Civil Division Sample Survey 1974

	HOUSEHOLDS			
	NON-MIGRANT	MIGRANT		
		TOTAL	RETURNED	NEW
No. in household	246	116	78	38
Mean no. per household	3.57	3.87	3.90	3.80
Age distribution				
% under 18	37	41	46	32
% 19-64	53	49	46	55
% 65 and over	10	10	8	13
% Total	100	100	100	100
Age Dependency Ratio				
Youth $\frac{0\text{-}18}{19\text{-}64}$ X 100	69	84	100	57
Aged $\frac{65 \text{ and over}}{19\text{-}64}$ X 100	20	19	17	24
Total $\frac{0\text{-}18 \text{ and } 65}{19\text{-}64}$ X 100	89	103	117	81
Employment status				
% employed	25.6	28.4	28.2	28.9
Sex ratio	107	93	73	153

TABLE 3

Selected characteristics of Non-Migrant, returned migrant and new migrant household heads: Age, occupation, education and income.

Minor Civil Division Sample Survey 1974

	Household Heads			
	NON MIGRANT	MIGRANT		
		TOTAL	RETURNED	NEW
No. of household head	69	30	20.	10.
Mean age	55.3	48.3	46.95	51.00
Occupation				
% in labor force	68	71	80	50
% white collar	30	19	19	20
% blue collar	29	48	62	0
% farmers	41	33	19	80
% total of those in labor force	100	100	100	100
% retired	25	23	15	40
% unemployed	7	6	5	10
% Total	100	100	100	100
Education				
% completing H.S. or more	38	50	50	50
Income				
Reported median	$11,833	$10,333	$10,166	$11,500

TABLE 4

Familial relationships existing within County for non-migrants, returned migrants and new migrants.

Minor Civil Division Sample Survey 1974

	Household Heads			
	NON MIGRANTS	MIGRANTS		
		TOTAL	RETURNED	NEW
% of Heads with one or both parents residing in County[1]	96	76	93	0
% of Spouses with one or both parents residing in County[1]	83	56	67	33
% of Households with more than one-half of relatives in County	42	43	60	10

1. Proportions are based on figures which exclude household heads and spouses whose parents are deceased.

TABLE 5

Contrast between goal-oriented moves and failure-to-adapt moves among returned migrants.

Minor Civil Division Sample Survey 1974

	RETURNED MIGRANTS			
	Goal-oriented moves		Failure to adapt moves	
Mean age	41.2	(N=13)	43.0	(N=7)
Mean household size	3.77	(N=13)	4.14	(N=7)
Median Income	$10,500	(N=11)	$9,000	(N=6)
% completing H.S.	62%		29%	
% in labor force in blue collar occupations	50%		67%	